

***Ottawa Area Superintendents Association
Position Statement – House Bill 4410 (Representative Joel Sheltroun)
June 22, 2009***

As any futurist will tell you, we can't even imagine the jobs our children and grandchildren will have. Preparing students for an as-yet-undefined future can be challenging. In an uncertain world, it makes sense that a rigorous curriculum in core academic subjects would form the foundation of any high school experience. In a general sense, we applaud the efforts of the legislature to standardize and elevate the academic expectations we have for all Michigan students.

At the same time, it should be an expectation that all high school students have the opportunity to explore and experience possible careers or career pathways. For many students, this exploration leads to a heightened interest in specific career training and accelerates their readiness for post-secondary training, including college.

Career and technical education (CTE) has evolved into rigorous educational preparation, with defined curriculum, embedded academic instruction, post-secondary transition planning, early college experiences, and assessments that provide data on skill mastery. Unlike the career and technical education of earlier years, students no longer prepare for a "single" job at an "entry" level. Students now have the opportunity to learn the foundation skills for an entire career pathway, with specific skill training in one or more areas. This "rounded-out" approach helps students widen their interests and avoid false starts. When articulated with post-secondary institutions, this training can truly jump-start a college education. Michigan CTE students earn thousands of tuition-free college credits and hundreds of thousands of scholarship dollars every year.

House Bill 4410, in its support of state-approved career and technical education, recognizes and elevates this second pathway to post secondary success. For this reason we support the legislation.

In no way do we support a retreat from high standards. We believe that all students can master a rigorous high school curriculum. We believe our students are capable of more than we expected in the past. We believe that every student should be college capable, even if not college bound. We believe that we must provide the foundational skills...academic and otherwise...that offer our students the best chance for success in an undefined future. We simply believe there is more than one way to achieve that success.

HB 4410 provides flexibility for molding the high school experience into a rigorous individualized plan while insuring a common academic foundation for each student. It is not an off-ramp. It is just a different road leading to the same achievement goals outlined in the Michigan Merit Curriculum. It acknowledges and validates that students will require flexibility to find success in high school and in the future that awaits them...whatever that future might hold.

-OASA includes the superintendents of Allendale, Coopersville, Grand Haven, Hamilton, Holland, Holland Christian, Hudsonville, Jenison, Saugatuck, Spring Lake, West Ottawa, and Zeeland Public Schools.